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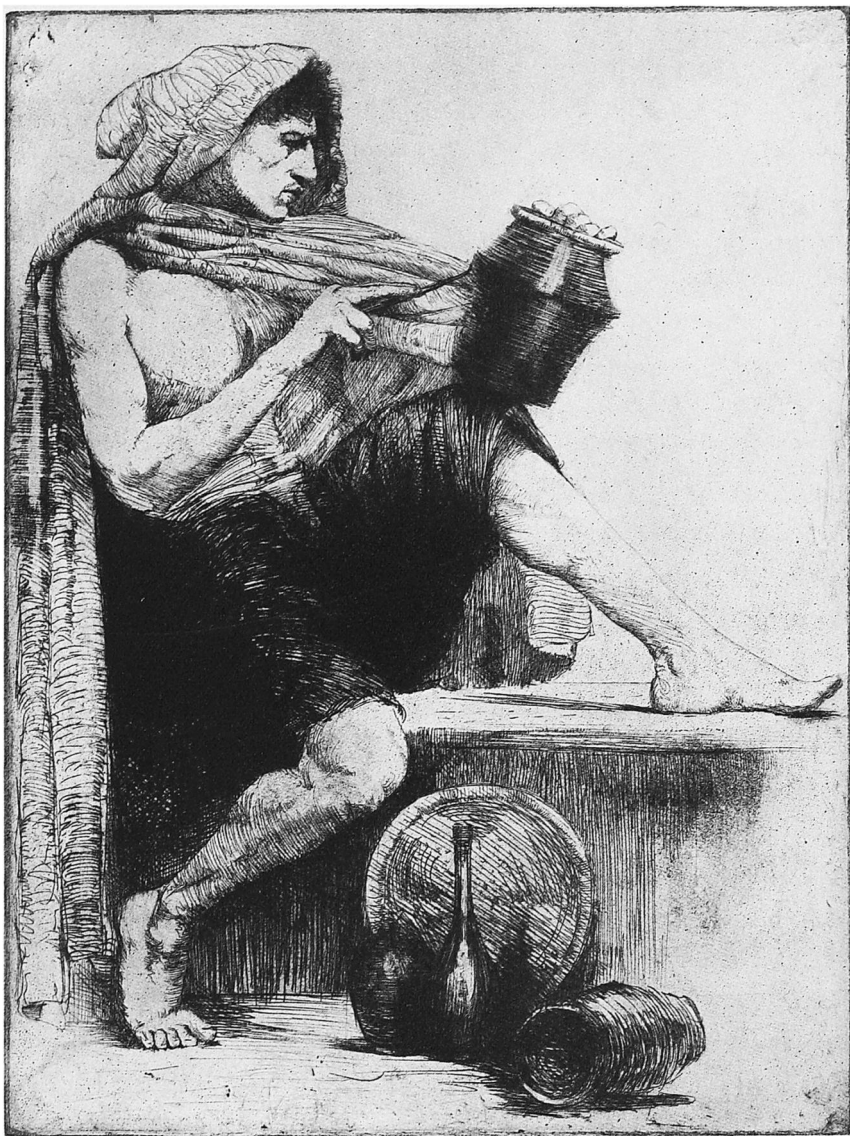
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THE POTTER—ETCHING

By H. H. Aronson

Second Prize, 1904, Baldwin Fund, N. A. of D.



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VERS TROITZY

By K. Tuon

RUSSIAN ART—ITS STRENGTH AND ITS WEAKNESS

When preparations were in progress for the World's Fair at St. Louis, Russia applied for and secured space for an extensive art exhibition, and it was confidently expected that the display would excel any exhibition of Russian art ever made outside of the empire. On the outbreak of the Russian-Japanese War, however, official notification was sent to America that the government had abandoned its project. The space reserved was consequently surrendered. How far the pronounced anti-Russian sentiment manifested by the American press was responsible for this decision is a matter of conjecture. That it was one of the prime reasons for the abandonment of the enterprise is generally believed; and the result was sincerely deplored by the World's Fair officials. Nevertheless, what Russia as a nation refused to do is to be done by private interests. As this issue of BRUSH AND PENCIL is going to press, an exhibit consisting of eight hundred paintings and other art works is on board a specially chartered steamer bound for this country, and the display will be installed at St. Louis with every possible dispatch. For American readers, therefore, an account of Russian art is especially opportune.

It is a somewhat curious but easily explicable fact, that Russia,



IN DEEP SORROW
By Theodor Axentowicz

whose history spans a period of over ten centuries, is yet in artistic development one of the most backward nations of continental Europe. Now and again during the later period of the empire's life a more or less conspicuous figure has appeared; but when all due consideration is had for these sporadic instances of native talent or genius developed to the point of commanding the world's attention, one must confess that the progress of the fine arts among the subjects of the Czar has been halting and tentative.

The art of other

European nations is known the world over; that of Russia is scarcely known beyond the confines of the empire. One can scarcely name a Russian painter, with the exception of Verestchagin, with whose works English-speaking communities are familiar. True, there have been numerous exhibitions of Russian canvases, but these have not been of a character to excite enthusiasm or even deep interest.

Is this tardy development of the Russian along the lines of pictorial art the witness of a lack of taste and aptitude, or is it the result of the inexorably stern conditions through which the empire has passed? Certainly the student would go astray in his judgment, and form a false impression of what has been accomplished, did he dissociate the art of the country from its life and its history. Taine's pregnant remark, "Under the shell there was an animal, and behind the document there was a man," should ever be kept in mind.

Old as is the Russian empire, in point of fact the Slavs are one of the latest comers into the world of civilization. They are of the Indo-European race, as were the Latins and Celts, and as are the Germans; but they were oppressed for centuries by the Western

peoples, and the very fact that we get our word "slave" from "Slav" is evidence of the scorn with which the Russians were regarded by their neighbors. Indeed, modern civilization, like that of the ancients, has built itself up almost independently of the Slavs. They have not been pioneers—not even close followers—in the intellectual or artistic progress of the world, and it has been affirmed, with some show of reason, that their inferiority has been due mainly, if not solely, to their geographical position. Be this as it may, the Slavs, as Waliszewski, one of their native historians and apologists has pointed out, have always been at school, always under some rod or sway. Whether it be the Oriental and material conquests of the thirteenth century or the Western and moral one of the eighteenth, the race merely undergoes a change of masters. Thus the evolution of the individuality of the race was no easy matter. Modern Russia still labors at the task in social life, in government, in literature, in art, in everything, and it is no matter for wonder that it has made relatively little progress.

"Between the Novgorod merchants and their sixteenth-century successors," says Waliszewski, "came the Mongol invasion. This does not suffice to explain the prolonged check in the organic development of the huge body which it left in life. Previously, indeed, gaps, periodic suppressions of growth and evolution, had been manifest, and they were repeated after the dis-



PORTRAIT
By L. Pasternak

appearance of this particular cause. They would seem to be the result of some constitutional vice, connected as much with race and climate as with the course of historical events. Under these inclement skies, history appears to have brought about an accidental mingling of elements, the ill-controlled action of which, when they chanced to harmonize, gave birth to violent outbreaks of energy, while, when they disagreed, the result became apparent in sudden



THE VISION OF LITTLE BARTHOLOMÄUS

By Nestero v

stoppages of progress. The outcome has something of the American in it, and yet something of the Turkish. Thanks to its geographical position betwixt Europe and Asia, thanks to its historical position betwixt a series of anvils, where on the Byzantine priest, the Tartar soldier, and the German free-lance have taken turns to hammer out its genius, Russia, young and old at once, has not yet found its orbit nor its true balance. Here we see a waste, there extreme refinement. Men have called it rotten ere it was ripe. But this must not be said. Prematurely ripe on one side, indeed, with a distracting medley of savage instincts and ideal aspirations, of intellectual riches and moral penury. But Nature must be given time to perfect her own work."

The mixture of races and their struggle against hostile conditions

of existence, against the climate, against foreign invasion, against internal dissention, have called into existence many a grave problem, and have left their impress upon the life, the spirit, the temperament, the institutions of the people. One of these impresses appears conspicuously in the Russian's literature and art. In his case realism is no theory: it is the application of natural instincts. Even in poetry and religion the Russian has a horror of abstractions. No meta-



PLACE D'IVAN VELIKI AU KREMLIN
By A. Vasnetzoff

physical spirit, no sentimentality whatsoever; great resourcefulness, perfect tact as regards both men and matters, and in all his ideas, his habits, his literature, and his art, a positivism carried to the point of brutality.

This, it has been affirmed, is the Russian psychology. But to all this and from the same causes is linked a marked proneness to melancholy. "Sadness, skepticism, irony," said Herzen, "are the three strings of Russian literature"; and he added, "Our laugh is but a sickly sneer." Virtually the same may be said of the art of the nation. Some weep, some dream. And in these last their melancholy inclines them to a hazy mysticism which either triumphs over the realistic instincts or else allies itself with them in strangest union.

To sum up these words of introduction, Russia presents a people, a literature, and an art standing apart geographically, ethnographically, historically, outside the Western European community. No doubt, as has been pointed out, the three great elements of Western civilization, the Christian, the Græco-Norman, and the German, are to be found at the base of this eccentric formation, but in very different proportion, combination and depth. The nation and all its intellectual and artistic interests have alike received the triple baptism which freed Russia from all the primitive barbarisms—the apostolate of Cyril and Methodius, the Varegian conquest, and the Byzantine civilization. But the hold of the conquerors, whether of Norman or of German origin, was weak and transient, and Russia was virtually left in darkness to grope her way as best she could under existing conditions. Thus, from the Crusades down to the Revolution, she bore no part in any of the manifestations of European life. She slumbered on, hard by, and it is not too much to say

that in many of the intellectual interests to which the rest of Europe long since awoke she is slumbering yet.

All this will easily be recognized by the student of Russian literature and of Russian art. Russian painting has no history such as that of the nations of Western Europe. Ecclesiastical art, in other countries the mother of the secular, while growing ever freer and more "worldly" itself, was in Russia bound with the shackles of a dogmatic rigidity which effectually prevented all development. Not until our own times has Victor Wasne-



A SPRING SONG
By Acek Malcewski

zoff found a way to instill new life into church art, in his frescoes in St. Vladimir Cathedral in Kiev, by an almost too clever compromise between the demands of the liturgical style and the realistic requirements of modern beholders. The attempts, however, previously made by Ivanov in his "John the Baptist," a picture historically so significant, and of Polienov in works like the "Christ and the Woman Taken in Adultery," and "Christ on the Shores of Galilee"



IN THE GARDEN
By Josef Mehoffer

(in which the actual lake is depicted), redounded rather to the advantage of historical than of ecclesiastical art, excellent though they be.

And thus, while Russian churches have been decorated, and holy things have been painted, for many centuries, Russian painting is really but one and a half centuries old. Within the last few decades only has much progress been made, thanks to an array of talented painters strong in national characteristics, and thanks, too, to the circumstance that the whole artistic tendency of Western Europe during the latter half of the nineteenth century—as witness the triumph of realism, first in France, then elsewhere—favored and fostered the cultivation of national traits. Within the Czar's realm traveling exhibitions have lately awakened and disseminated interest in the development of national art, and gradually Russian pictures began to find their way across the frontier. First came the Verestchagin cycle, its ghastly canvases preaching "war on war" long before Bertha von Suttner launched her "Ground Arms" upon the deaf ears of the nations and their rulers. Afterwards came Repin's splendid Cossack picture, full of the joy of battle, but vastly better artistically than Verestchagin's. Presently we made the acquaintance of the sculptor Antokolsky, whose sound but enormously overestimated talents occasionally succeeded in producing a work of dignity. At



MOONRISE

By Jan Stanislawski

length, in 1898, there was sent from the empire a little collection of Russian pictures which made a deep impression, most of which were finally shown at the Paris Exposition.

Though, as stated, Russia has no art history similar to that of the other nations of Europe, a few "historical" notes may here be inserted prior to any words of appreciation of present-day work. Of the beginnings of painting in Russia, previous to the year 1700, little is known, as nothing authentic has been handed down to us, except illuminated manuscripts, bronzes, carvings, wall-paintings, and the like. Early in the eighteenth century, Peter the Great invited a few foreign artists to the court of St. Petersburg to execute the portraits of the royal family and his courtiers. The palaces also received the Czar's attention, and he commissioned the artists, Dannhauer, Grooth, and the elder Lampi, to decorate them after the European style. Afterwards Toque, Rotari, and many other artists settled in St. Petersburg, and from these the barbaric Russians gradually acquired a taste for the fine arts.

The first Russian to gain a reputation as a painter was Levitzky; indeed, his reputation extended beyond the Russian frontier, for as a draftsman and colorist he took high rank amongst the European portraitists of the eighteenth century. Theodor Rokotov and Vladimir Borovikovsky also painted portraits. In the latter's portrait of Catherine II. one finds good coloring, which greatly resembles the work of Rafael Menges and Vigée-Lebrun. The pictures of Alexei Egorov, Grigorig Ugrumov, and Andreas Ivanov, though highly

praised in their time, receive but little attention at the present day. The next artist of any note was Orest Kiprensky, a portrait-painter. His portraits of his father and Captain Davydov, at the Hermitage, are excellent examples of his work, which shows the influence of Titian and Van Dyck. Alexei Venezianov was a painter of peasants; and Sylvester Stschedrin achieved no small measure of success as a landscapist. Stschedrin is called the founder of Russian landscape-painting, for he painted nature as he saw it, which was contrary to the conventional style then in vogue. Then followed Alexander O. Orlovsky, a painter of battle scenes, who was born in Poland, but who went to Russia while still very young. He entered the army as an infantryman during the Napoleonic campaigns, and made direct studies of the soldiers in camp, on the march, and in battle, which he ever afterwards used in his work.

The chief historical painter of this period was Karl Pavlovich Brüllov, whose "Fall of Pompeii" created something of a sensation in Russia. Brüllov studied at first at the St. Petersburg Academy under Ivanov, and afterwards at Rome. He visited Turkey, Greece, and Palestine, and upon his return was made court painter and professor at the academy. The success of his "Pompeii" caused a number of artists to devote themselves to historical painting, among whom were Peter Bassin, Peter Schamschin, Jacob Kapkov, Con-



MAISON DE DIEU
By Rerich

stantin Flavitzky, and Theodor von Moller. Another historical painter of note is Hendrik Siemiradzky. He was born in Poland, studied at the St. Petersburg Academy, and later with Piloty in Munich. He produced many pictures, the subjects being taken from Greek and Roman legends, received several gold medals, and was made a member of the Legion of Honor in 1878. Feodor Antonovich Bruni, second only to Brulov as a history painter, left many highly prized pictures, some of his best works being in the St. Isaac's Cathedral in St. Petersburg. One of the best colorists of this period was Neff, who essayed successfully history, *genre*, and portrait-painting. Among his best known works are "Nymphs in a Grotto" and "Nymph Bathing," which hang in the Hermitage gallery at St. Petersburg.

The first attempt at realism is found in the "Messiah amongst the People," painted by Alexander Ivanov. He was a close student of nature, and is said to have made two hundred sketches preparatory to painting this great picture, which took him twenty-seven years to complete. The works of P. Fedotov, who depicted the scenes of every-day life, found many admirers, and a number of *genre* painters followed his lead, who for the most part painted the humorous side of life. The most prominent of these were Vassily Sternberg, Stschedrovsky, Alexander Morosov, Ivan Sokolov, Constantin



FOUND DROWNED
By Dimitried-Orenburgsky



DROP-CURTAIN IN THEATER AT LEMBERG

By Henryk Siemiradski

Trutovsky, Wilhelm Timm, Andrei Popov, and Thirsus Shuravlev. The paintings of Vassili Perov depict the miseries of the Russian peasants, his "Funeral in the Country" reminding one of the pictures by Wiertz. The teachings of Tolstoi found several disciples among the artists, of whom Tukirev, Korsuchin, Prjanischnikov, Savitzky, and Lemoch are the best known. The most famous of these was Vassili Verestchagin, whose delineations of the horrors of war, as stated above, have made his name known throughout the world. The artist contended that war was wrong, and in his awful after-the-battle scenes, with the dead and dying soldiers strewn over the bloody ground, he makes his plea for peace.

Landscape-painting received a new impetus in 1863, when a number of art students at St. Petersburg rebelled against the instructors, who insisted upon choosing the subjects to be painted for the competitive exercises. The chief of this band of revolvers was Ivan Kramskoi, whose style has had many admirers and imitators, though the works of some of the present-day artists surpass his. Another historical and portrait-painter is Constantin Makovsky, who for a time was professor at the St. Petersburg Academy. He has produced many fine works, and has twice toured the United States, painting the portraits of prominent Americans. His brother Vladimir Makovsky has also won praise for his cleverly executed *genre* and landscape-paintings. Other successful painters who might be mentioned are Tschistjakov, Schwarz, Gay, and Jacoby, and last and perhaps greatest of all Elias Repin, who was born in 1844, at



OFF TO THE WAR
By Savitsky

Tschugnev, received his first lessons in drawing from a mechanical painter of saints, worked in the painter's shop for three years, and then entered the Academy at St. Petersburg, studying there for six years, and after winning a medal and a traveling scholarship, going to France and Italy to study the old masters.

From the point of view of purely æsthetic pleasure, the Russian exhibit in Paris in 1900, referred to above, offered, perhaps, no more than the others. Yet it was valuable and instructive as a comprehensive survey of what is going forward in that country; instructive



SOBIESKI BEFORE VIENNA
By Jan Matejko

both as an exhibit and as a means of comparison. In what respect did this "young" art differ from the older schools around it? If one stepped into some of the neighboring galleries, the Portuguese, for example, the impulse was strong to turn and go back. Compared with the spiritless polish, the academic routine, the impersonal shallowness of the former, how sturdy and independent the Russian pictures appeared! On the other hand, compared with the Dutch or Danish, how unfinished, how little touched by the spirit of the specifically artistic did they become! But, to be just, let us bear in mind that these defects will gradually disappear, subdued by the excellences I have noted, and that the significance of a national school is not determined by the average production, but by the works of the few in whom the best of the nation finds expression; who, in excelling their own compatriots, are yet able to offer to foreign eyes something new and worth while, and what is more, nationally typical.

I may mention here a few works specifically, it being understood that most of Russia's present-day painters have scarcely won a reputation. There is a sure guaranty for the growth of Russian art, however, in the fact that the best of her disciples are engaged in



ILLUSTRATION FOR THE LORD'S PRAYER
By Josef Mencina Krzesz

depicting their own landscapes, scenes of home life, and portraits. Elias Repin himself, the master of the "Cossack's Answer," has done some portraits which, while unimaginative and artistically rather pointless, are extraordinarily fresh and true as character studies and impressions of life. Valentin Seroff excels Repin in portraiture, in pure artistic spirit. His "Archduke Paul," his "Red-Cheeked, Short-Haired Girl," and his "Lady in Black" are even surpassed by his "Young Woman in a Light Ball Gown," seated on a dark blue, richly patterned sofa. The harmonious color of this picture impresses itself upon the memory as ineradicably as the racial piquanterie of the irregular, yellow-tinged features combined with black eyes and hair. Constantin Korovin, in his double portrait of the "Spanish Ladies," remains true to his favorite and somewhat uncertain style of depicting faces in the twilight of a shaded interior.

Philip Maliavin's "Russian Peasant" and "Peasant Woman"—the former especially effective in the distribution of light and shade—point the way to Russian *genre* painting, which hitherto, however, has rarely escaped the reefs of purely episodic picturing. Constantin Makovsky's "Newly Married" arouses in us the suggestion of a painted prelude to Tolstoi's Powers of Darkness, and Nicholas Kassatkin's scene "In the Corridor of the Court-house" tells—not for the first time, but still not without originality—of the parting of a prisoner from his heartbroken wife. In Gregor Miassoyedoff's "Mass in Time of Drought" one feels that the painter was solely concerned with setting forth the typical in the appearance of the people and of the sun-baked plain. Nesterov's admirable "Monks" recall Cyriac Kostandi's "Spring." The contrast of the feeble, sombrely clad old priest with the brilliant landscape, throbbing with new life, is perhaps, a little cheap, but the spirit of nature is truly apprehended and finely given. Abraham Archipov's "Old Fisherman," and Harlamoff's "Young Girl" present impressively and unobtrusively the harmony of man and landscape. Deeper and more powerful—as well as artistically far stronger—is Victor Vasnezoff's "Alenuschka," illustrating a Russian fairy-tale. While he and Repin have dedicated to their fatherland the national "great" painting, others have not been wanting to prove that pure landscape, the paysage intime, is a field no longer closed to Russian painters. Besides the vigorous Pourvit and the rather impersonal Volkov, I will just mention the most delicate and most deeply sensitive of all the Russian landscape-painters, Isaak Levitan—unhappily no longer among the living. His pictures, mostly filled with a silent, though not feeble melancholy, seem to promise that Russian painting shall one day attain that incomparable power over sensibility, that silently eloquent poetry of the realization of nature's deepest depths which Russian literature has now so long been seeking to claim as its own.

The sculptor, Antokolsky and the painter Repin are practically

the only contemporary Russians, except of course Verestchagin, who have made any impression by their art outside of their native land. Many Americans will remember Repin's "Cossack's Answer," which was shown in Chicago in 1893, and which is one of those works not easily forgotten, even though one is conscious that it appeals through the rude power and barbaric humor of the figures rather than through unified artistic conception and deep insight. Tens of thousands will recall with a sense of awe Verestchagin's sermons in paint. What



VENGEANCE OF JURAND
By Batowski

the Russian exhibit will be at St. Louis cannot now be stated, but if it have such canvases as those I have referred to specifically above, the collection will be an interesting accession to the fine arts display, and will serve as a witness to the efforts of a backward but earnest body of workers.

Whatever be the showing, it must be viewed, with this consideration in mind, that Russian art is virtually in its infancy. Its great masters, with few exceptions, are yet to be, are perhaps now in the making. The artists have much to learn in the way of finish from the nations of Western Europe; but they have what the painters of some other countries have lost—an art distinctively national. It is to be hoped they will not surrender this characteristic, for on it depends the future of Russian art.*

E. N. KEYSER.

*For other examples of Russian art, see following pages.